

REMARKS

In the Office Action¹, the Examiner rejected claims 1-5, 13-15, 20-24, 32-36, 44-46, and 51-55 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over JP 10-65662 to Ishiguro et al. ("*Ishiguro*") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,314,409 to Schneck et al. ("*Schneck*"), U.S. Patent No. 6,374,036 to Ryan et al. ("*Ryan*"), and U.S. Patent No. 6,226,618 to Downs et al. ("*Downs*").

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection of claims 1-5, 13-15, 20-24, 32-36, 44-46, and 51-55 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a). The Examiner is respectfully directed to the Declaration indicating a claim for priority to Japanese Patent Application No. 10-200264, filed July 15, 1998, and to the Office Action mailed October 10, 2001, indicating acknowledgement of the priority claim. A certified English translation of Japanese Patent Application No. 10-200264 was enclosed with Appellant's Reply Brief. *Downs* has a filing date of August 13, 1998.

In view of the priority date of this application, Applicants respectfully submit that *Downs* is not prior art against this patent application. Claims 1-5, 13-15, 20-24, 32-36, 44-46, and 51-55 distinguish *Ishiguro*, *Schneck*, and *Ryan* as set forth in Applicant's Appeal Brief and Supplemental Appeal Brief. In view of the foregoing remarks,

¹ The Office Action contains a number of statements reflecting characterizations of the related art and the claims. Regardless of whether any such statement is identified herein, Applicants decline to automatically subscribe to any statement or characterization in the Office Action.


Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of this application and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our deposit account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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